

9/14/09

(17)

Bob Murray  
9/4/09

**Maryjane Kenney**

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**From:** Roland Bartl  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 03, 2009 10:19 PM  
**To:** John Murray  
**Cc:** Manager Department  
**Subject:** 09-09 comment letter - TIP & RTP - for rail trails  
**Attachments:** 09-09 comment letter - TIP & RTP.doc

John:

The attached draft letter for Selectmen signature is due at the MPO no later than September 22, i.e. the end of the comment period on the Draft TIP and Draft Regional Transportation Plan Amendment.

If there is no meeting before then or if it cuts too close for action, we need to figure out another way to issue it.

Thanks -

Roland Bartl, AICP  
Planning Director  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720  
(978) 264-9636

9/4/2009

**September 4, 2009**

**Public Notice**

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has added one paragraph to the draft Amendment of the JOURNEY to 2030 long-range transportation plan (Plan Amendment).

A paragraph was added to the description of the Green Line Extension Project on pages 13-74 and 13-75 of the draft Plan Amendment. The draft Plan Amendment can be viewed at the MPO's website, [www.bostonmipo.org](http://www.bostonmipo.org). Also on the website are the MPO's antidiscrimination statement and related information.

Copies of the updated pages are obtainable by contacting MPO staff: by mail at 10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150, Boston, MA 02116-3968; by voice at (617) 973-7089; by fax at (617) 973-8855; or by e-mail at [publicinformation@ctps.org](mailto:publicinformation@ctps.org). Copies are free of charge and, upon request, will be made available in print and accessible formats.



**Board of Selectmen**

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September 2, 2009

David Mohler, Chair  
Transportation Planning & Programming Committee,  
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116

**RE: Acton Area Rail Trails in  
Draft 2010-13 Transportation Improvement Program and  
Draft Amendment to the JOURNEY TO 2030 Regional Transportation Plan**

Dear Mr. Mohler:

On behalf of the Town of Acton and our neighboring communities along the **Assabet River Rail Trail** and the **Bruce Freeman Rail Trail**, the Acton Board of Selectmen would like to thank the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee and the Boston Region MPO for including these rail trail projects in the Draft 2010-13 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the proposed amendment to the JOURNEY TO 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

**Assabet River Rail Trail – ARRT (ID#604531)**

Federal High Priority Project (HPP 1761) funding for the ARRT is included in the Draft TIP for FFY 2010 in the amount of \$1,349,851. A preliminary design for the Acton-Maynard portion had been completed nearly two years ago with local funds and received MassHighway PRC approval earlier this year. Further design efforts had to be put on hold pending release of the HPP funds. Listing of the ARRT construction funding (\$20,349,000) for the 2011-15 time period in the Regional Transportation Plan removes that hurdle and allows us to access the HPP funding immediately to advance and complete this design. We are very thankful for that.

***Notes on the ARRT in the documents***

### ***In the Draft TIP***

1. In the Draft TIP – Chapter 3 the ARRT is noted as located in the municipalities of Acton and Stow (pages 13, 14, 16, 27). Please note that the ARRT project begins in Acton, traverses Maynard and Stow and runs into and Hudson where it meets the already completed section from Route 62 in Hudson into Marlborough. Therefore, the listing should refer to Acton/Maynard/Stow/Hudson, or short “Acton to Hudson”.
2. Also in Chapter 3 of the Draft TIP, the HPP funding is listed as dedicated for Assabet River Rail Trail Design. It is our understanding that the HPP funding is dedicated for acquisition, design and/or construction. While most of the HPP funding will be used for design, we want to be sure that it can also be used for the other two purposes, especially acquisition if advancement in the design should reveal the need for it.
3. The brief project description on page 27 of the Draft TIP states “Design the Acton and Maynard sections of the Assabet Rail Trail from Main Street in South Acton to the Maynard/Stow border”. Please note that only somewhat more than half of the HPP funds will be used immediately for completing the design in Acton and Maynard to the Stow town line. The remainder will be used for acquisitions and design in Stow and Hudson to bring the entire length of the trail to construction readiness within the next 5 years (see Table 13-3 in the Draft Amendment to the JOURNEY TO 2030 Regional Transportation Plan: “Assabet River Rail Trail (Hudson to Acton)”).

### ***In the Draft RTP Amendment***

4. The ARRT project is correctly tagged on page 13-40 of the Draft RTP Amendment as spanning from Hudson to Stow. However, the construction project description should be inclusive of Stow and Hudson to Route 62 in Hudson. For accuracy, the accompanying map should show the project as extending to Route 62 in Hudson.

### **Bruce Freeman Rail Trail – BFRT (ID#604532 Phase 2A & ID#605189 Phase 2C)**

We very much appreciate the listing of the construction funding for the BFRT (Phase 2A and 2C) - \$29,871,000) in the 2021-25 time period in the Regional Transportation Plan. Our joy is tempered by the long wait – more than 10 years. We understand the MPO's difficult task of working within severely limited budget targets, but remain hopeful that the project schedule can be accelerated significantly. We urge the MPO to keep the BFRT in mind in any future editions and amendments of the Regional Transportation Plan or the TIP in the event that financial constraints ease, other projects get delayed or set aside, or transportation priorities shift.

### ***Notes on the BFRT in the Draft RTP Amendment***

1. The project is referred to correctly in Table 12-2 of the Financial Plan Chapter as extending from Concord to Westford (Phases 2A and 2C); also in Table 13-1 and Table 13-3 of the chapter on the Recommended Transportation Plan. The project is also correctly delimited on Map 13-13, page 13-37.
2. However, the narrative on page 13-36 describes the project as including Phases 2A, 2C, and 3 “beginning in Acton and ending in Framingham”. This should be corrected. The current and future costs for the BFRT listed in the Draft RTP Amendment only cover the portions listed with their project ID numbers in the header above, being Phases 2A and 2C, extending from Route 225 in Westford, through Carlisle, Acton, and Concord to the Concord/Sudbury town line as depicted

on Map 13-13. No portions or phases in Sudbury and Framingham are currently included.

3. Some day, once fully completed, the BFRT will extend from Lowell to Framingham. For your better understanding of the various phases, we include on the following pages a summary description of the BFRT that the Friend of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail had prepared in October 2008.

Sincerely,

Paulina Knibbe  
Chairman  
Board of Selectmen  
Town of Acton

Cc: Hayes Morrison, CTPS  
Anne McGahan, CTPS  
Michelle Ciccolo, Hudson  
Don Rising, Stow  
Carolyn Britt, Maynard  
Tom Kelleher, ARRT, Inc.  
Duncan Powers, ARRT, Inc.  
Paul Starratt, Westford  
Madonna McKenzie, Carlisle  
Marcia Rasmussen, Concord  
Tom Michelman, Friends of the BFRT  
David Shedd, MassHighway

### Summary Status of BFRT

Attribute	Phase 1	Phase 2A	Phase 2B	Phase 2C	Phase 2 - Sudbury	Phase 3
Miles	6.8	4.9	Unknown, likely ~0.5	3.1	3.5	4.6
Right-of-Way Ownership	EOTPW	EOTPW	EOTPW	EOTPW	EOTPW	CSXT
Towns (North to South)	Lowell, Chelmsford & Westford	Westford, Carlisle & Acton	Acton & Concord (Route 2 Rotary)	Concord	Sudbury	Sudbury & Framingham
Summary Status	Under Construction – Scheduled completion summer 2009	25% Design Public Meeting Scheduled	25% Design & Environmental Review ongoing	25% Design submitted to MassHighway and is pending review	Preliminary design efforts ongoing	ROW negotiations (Sudbury) and investigation (Framingham) ongoing
MassHighway Project #	601456	604532	602091	605189	n/a	n/a
MassHighway District	4	3	4	4	3	3
PRC Approval	Yes	Yes	Yes	Pending	n/a	n/a
Budgeted Design Costs	n/a	\$770,000	n/a	\$660,000	n/a	n/a
Budgeted or Estimated Construction Costs	\$4,980,000	\$7,700,000	n/a (fraction of \$20,000,000 rotary redesign)	\$6,030,000	\$4,000,000 (est.)	n/a
Most Recent Local Approvals	n/a	Inter-municipal agreement among all 3 Towns approved at Spring Town Meetings	Requesting public input most recently at September 2008 Public Meeting	Articles approving the Town's 25% design and allocating \$50,000 in additional design funds were approved at April 2008 Town Meeting	April 2006 Town Meeting for 4 CPA Articles.	Sudbury: April 2008 CPA funds for ROW acquisition. Framingham: BOS 2008 ROW appraisal authorization

Note Phase 2 is on the 2008-2011 TIP as DM0235 for 2011 for \$3.0 million. Phase 2 has been dropped from the draft 2009-2012 Draft TIP Tables.

#### Phase 1 (Lowell, Chelmsford & Westford)

The BFRT has strong support from the municipalities, local businesses, and residents. Several businesses in Chelmsford Center are designing their facilities to attract customers from the BFRT. Chelmsford and Westford residents have expressed interest in using the

BFRT to get to NARA Park and Butter Brook Golf Course in Acton. Acton residents have expressed interest in being able to commute to jobs at Cross Point in Lowell from Acton.

MassHighway issued the Notice to Proceed for Phase 1 on August 9, 2007. Construction began in September 2007. In the past year, the contractor has cleared trees and brush, removed the rails and ties, reconstructed four bridges, installed curbing in Chelmsford Center, and begun excavation and grading. The trail base has been installed between Route 3 and Golden Cove Road in Chelmsford; work is proceeding towards Westford. The contract completion date is August 2009, with one six-month extension allowed. The BFRT goes through the heart of the Chelmsford Center business and historic districts and along key local commuter routes in Chelmsford and Westford.

### **Phase 2A (Westford, Carlisle, & Acton)**

Phase 2A of the BFRT is very strongly supported. This spring each Town Meeting passed an inter-municipal agreement so that Acton could be the single town to contract with MassHighway as the project proceeded. The warrant articles on the inter-municipal agreement passed overwhelmingly in all three communities. Previous Town Meetings have passed all articles associated with moving the BFRT in all three towns. A summary of appropriated funds is as follows:

- Westford (0.13 miles), \$20,000 for preliminary design
- Carlisle (0.16 miles), \$20,000 for preliminary design
- Acton, (5.48 miles), \$25,000 for a feasibility study, and \$452,000 for preliminary design

Phase 2A won PRC approval this spring, and the MassHighway 25% Design Meeting is scheduled for October 29, 2008.

An application for Statewide Enhancement Program (STEP) for design funds through 100% design was submitted and pre-approved in June 2008. A vote at a September 24, 2008 State Transportation Enhancement Steering Committee recommended Secretary Cohen allocate such funds.

### **Phase 2B (Concord Rotary)**

25% design and environmental review is moving forward. MassHighway held the first public workshop on June 3, 2008. More than 100 people attended and more than 60 submitted comments. A second public workshop is scheduled for September 24, 2008.

### **Phase 2C (Concord)**

The BFRT has received widespread community support at three different Town Meetings. The April 2006 Town Meeting voted to approve CPA funding of \$160,000 for the preliminary 25% design of the rail trail. Petition warrant articles at the 2007 special Town Meeting that would have delayed the 25% design were not supported by voters. The April 2008 Town Meeting voted to approve the preliminary 25% design for submission to MassHighway and voted to authorize an additional \$50,000 to fund revisions to the plan as requested by Town Meeting.

An application for Statewide Enhancement Program (STEP) for design funds for Phase 2C through 100% design was added as addendum to the Phase 2A STEP applications and submitted in August 2008. A vote at a September 24, 2008 State Transportation Enhancement Steering Committee recommended Secretary Cohen allocate such funds.

The Town has submitted its 25% design to MassHighway for its review. Funding for the 75% and 100% designs is being sought from CPA funds and the Town Capital Improvement Plan, in case the STEP application is unsuccessful.

NOTE: The BFRT connects to the West Concord Commuter Rail Station.

### **Phase 2 (Sudbury)**

- An Engineering and Environmental Assessment funded by CPA funds, \$25,000, approved by the 2005 Town meeting , was completed.
- Three studies were approved at April 2007 Town Meeting
  - Title Search \$15,000 (underway)
  - Wildlife Study \$25,000 (underway). The wildlife study cannot be completed until the end of the year, as it must await the end of the fall season.
  - Existing Conditions Base Map \$105,000 (underway)

The Sudbury Rail Trail Conversion Advisory Committee is working to complete a comprehensive document, referred to as the "Notebook", dealing with nearly every aspect of rail-trail development, including the experiences of other rail trails in this part of the state. Its purpose is to provide the Board of Selectmen (BOS) with reliable information that will assist them in arriving at a recommendation to the Town about proceeding with the development of the BFRT or not. The Notebook should be essentially complete by the end of the year.

### **Phase 3 (Sudbury & Framingham: 1.4 miles in Sudbury and 3.2 miles in Framingham)**

In 2006 a feasibility study was completed by the Central Transportation Planning Staff<sup>1</sup>. This study examines Phase 3 of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, the section from Route 9 in Framingham to the crossing of the Mass. Central rail bed just north of Route 20 in Sudbury. The study looks at the history, geography, road crossings, accident statistics, projected usage, community impacts and estimated costs. It concludes Phase 3 is feasible.

Sudbury voted at its 2008 Town Meeting to use no more than \$420,000 of CPA funds for the purchase of the CSXT ROW from South Sudbury to the Framingham boundary. This is in addition to a Drinking Water grant of \$247,350 from MA DCR towards the purchase of the right-of-way in Sudbury. The negotiations on this purchase are apparently still under way, but have not been made public.

In April 2008 the Framingham BOS voted to authorize an appraisal of the CSXT ROW. In addition the Framingham BOS voted in principle to become the receiver of the land when negotiations progress.

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<sup>1</sup> *Feasibility Study for a Proposed Extension of the Bruce N. Freeman Memorial Path in Sudbury and Framingham*, Cathy Buckley Lewis, Central Transportation Planning Staff, Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, October 2006